

Executive Summary

Final Report of the Missouri Domestic Violence Task Force

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Task Force mission

Governor Bob Holden appointed the Missouri Domestic Violence Task Force in August 2001 to study solutions for domestic violence in Missouri. The Task Force was established by the Governor to focus on four specific tasks: 1) to conduct an inventory of state funding and resources dedicated to domestic violence; 2) to enhance public and private resources; 3) to investigate opportunities to expand domestic violence prevention and intervention services; and 4) to work toward the development of a coordinated and integrated strategic action plan that will advance the needs, policies, and priorities set by the Task Force. The mission of the Task Force was delineated in Governor Holden's Executive Order 01-13.

Summary Findings of the Missouri Domestic Violence Task Force

Long-Term Commitment by Leaders within Government Required to Address Domestic Violence through a Strategic Action Plan

It is the finding of the Missouri Domestic Violence Task Force that a long-term commitment by those in the highest levels of authority within every department of Missouri government is required to address domestic violence through a strategic and integrated action plan. To date, there has been no such plan developed to comprehensively focus on domestic violence prevention and services throughout Missouri government. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Task Force that state government in Missouri must prioritize efforts to incorporate domestic violence prevention, education, screening and services as an integral aspect of its public services.

In 2002, Governor Bob Holden directed every state department to develop strategic goals and priorities within the larger framework of his vision for Missouri as detailed in the document, "Managing for Results." The Task Force recommends that those "Managing for Results" strategic plans identify and incorporate goals and outcomes to prevent and reduce domestic violence in Missouri.

Action Can Be Taken Despite Current Budget Constraints

The Task Force recognizes that despite the limitations of current state budget constraints, action can be taken to implement long-term goals to address domestic violence through state government. The outcomes sought through such concerted effort will not be attained immediately, but the process of moving toward them will produce tangible results that will increase the safety and well being of Missouri families.

Opportunities to Prevent and Reduce Domestic Violence Exist Throughout State Government

The genesis of a government-wide systemic response to domestic violence is the recognition by the leadership of each department that their existing missions and responsibilities include opportunities to address and prevent domestic violence.

This requires a commitment to undertake the ongoing analysis, policy development, and action within each department to identify its role in a statewide collaboration to end the violence.

Public and Private Partnerships Increase Resources for Domestic Violence Victims and Further Prevention Efforts

There is a role for state government, working in concert to augment the efforts and expertise within communities and existing advocacy services, to inform the public of the reality of domestic violence and to increase the resources to reduce the occurrence and impact of the violence.

Framework to Guide a Statewide Domestic Violence Strategic Plan

History of Public and Private Efforts to Address Domestic Violence Has Identified Successful Models to Further Governmental Action

The past twenty-five years of work to address domestic violence throughout the United States has led to significant changes in responses to the violence by both government and private, community-based services. These changes have occurred within law enforcement, court systems, community-based services, public and higher education, prevention efforts, health care, businesses, and a wide array of other services and systems that have been involved in reducing domestic violence.

This work has identified common, successful ways by which public and private efforts can combine to prevent and reduce domestic violence. It is upon this foundation that the Task Force recommends that a framework be built throughout Missouri state government to reduce the impact and occurrence of domestic violence.

Seven Essential Elements Identified for Developing a Strategic Plan throughout State Government to Address Domestic Violence

The Task Force recommends the following framework of essential elements be adopted as the guiding focus areas to implement a strategic domestic violence response and action plan throughout state government. These topics are the basic elements of prevention and intervention identified by the Task Force for each state department to include in its strategic plan, and in its programs and services. These areas of focus, with preliminary long-term goals identified by the Task Force, include:

- Prevention and Public Awareness;
- Services to Victims and Community Collaboration;
- Education and Training;
- Screening and Early Identification;
- Health Care;
- Offender Accountability; and
- Economic and Business Impact.

The full Final Report of the Missouri Domestic Violence Task Force details achievable goals for state departments under each of these elements of a framework to guide a statewide domestic violence strategic plan.

Proposed Structure to Achieve Strategic Goals within State Government to Reduce and Prevent Domestic Violence in Missouri

The Task Force recommends that the following approach be adopted to guide efforts to address domestic violence throughout Missouri state government:

1. The Task Force asks that Governor Holden renew the appointment of the Missouri Domestic Violence Task Force to continue working as the body providing coordination, technical assistance and evaluation of domestic violence prevention and response efforts undertaken within each state department;
2. Department directors, at the direction of the Governor, will be responsible for initiating approaches to address domestic violence through existing departmental responsibilities and strategic plans;
3. Department directors will identify leaders within divisions and public service arenas who will commence the internal tasks of identifying immediate and long-term policy and programmatic opportunities to address domestic violence within their departments;
4. The Task Force will reorganize itself to include seven subcommittees focused on the elements of the strategic framework for addressing domestic violence in Missouri. The subcommittees parallel the focus areas identified by the Task Force to be addressed through departmental strategic plans, and are:
 - Prevention and Public Awareness;
 - Services to Victims and Community Collaboration;
 - Education and Training;
 - Screening and Early Identification;
 - Health Care;
 - Offender Accountability; and
 - Economic Impact.

Conclusion

The prevention and reduction of domestic violence in the state of Missouri must engage the vision and commitment of leaders throughout state government. This priority effort requires identification and development of strategic plans to address domestic violence as an essential element of the mission of each department. The work required is extensive, but the benefits to the citizens of Missouri are life saving.